

Eisenhower Fellowship, and for 9 years served as the first Vietnamese citizen and the first woman to direct VVAF's programs in Vietnam. I was introduced to Thao by Bobby Muller 17 years ago, and since then, she has become a trusted source of invaluable advice for me and my staff. Even more than that, she is a friend to me and to my wife Marcelle, who once had the exhilarating experience of riding around the city of Hanoi on the back of Thao's motor scooter. Anyone familiar with Hanoi traffic knows what that means.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that none of the war legacy initiatives that have played such a central role in building a comprehensive partnership between the U.S. and Vietnam would have progressed as they have without Thao's constant encouragement and thoughtful advice. Fluent in English and a networker extraordinaire with unlimited positive energy, on a first name basis with many of Vietnam's top civilian and military leaders, academics and artists, and U.S. and foreign diplomats, Thao has helped build bridges between key players in both governments in ways that I doubt anyone else could have. For the past decade and a half, Thao has, more than anyone else, helped to smooth the way for the leaders of both governments to keep striving to deepen and expand our relations by overcoming distrust, bureaucratic obstacles, and cultural differences. Her efforts have had a profound and lasting impact on our relations, our mutual understanding, and on the lives of the Vietnamese and American people.

This work has been among the things I am proudest of having had a role in during my 48 years in the Senate. On behalf of myself and my wife Marcelle, I want to express my deepest appreciation to Thao Griffiths for her invaluable help in making it possible.

TRIBUTE TO DEAN SEIBERT

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, in 1986, when much of Central America was embroiled in armed conflicts in which hundreds of thousands of people, overwhelmingly civilians, were killed, a group of parishioners from the Franconia, NH, Congregational Church established Americans Caring Teaching Sharing—ACTS. They traveled to Honduras to support peace and justice through community development, beginning in the small subsistence farming village of El Rosario in the highlands of northwestern Honduras.

Since then, ACTS has become a nonprofit, nonsectarian organization involving hundreds of volunteers who have contributed thousands of hours to ACTS' mission of improving the lives of people in rural Honduras through community projects focused on basic healthcare, nutrition, sanitation, education, agriculture, and economic diversification. ACTS is governed and sustained by volunteers. Teams travel to Honduras several times a year, for a

week or 2, to help move the projects forward.

Over the years, the program has expanded to include about a dozen communities surrounding El Rosario. ACTS has developed a close working relationship with the villagers, who are the visionaries for progress. The villagers set the priorities and perform much of the labor. ACTS volunteers provide the technical skills, guidance, material resources, and hands-on help. The result has been a successful example of sustainable, community development in one of the most neglected, impoverished parts of the country.

In addition to the Honduran communities in which ACTS supports projects, it has developed partnerships and associations with many U.S. and Honduran organizations, institutions of higher education, and foundations.

I mention this to provide context and to highlight the extraordinary dedication and leadership of Dean Seibert, long-time resident of Norwich, VT, and professor emeritus at the Geisel School of Medicine, who has been affiliated with ACTS for over 20 years and led the organization for most of that time. He has visited El Rosario as team leader over 30 times. This year alone Dean traveled there three times. Some might find that remarkable, since Dean celebrated his 90th birthday in August. To those who know Dean, it wasn't remarkable at all. His enthusiasm and dedication are indefatigable.

Dean has long had an interest in community development and the challenges of providing healthcare to people of different cultures and traditions. He has worked with the Tohono O'odum, Navajo, Hopi, and Pueblo tribes in the American southwest, and he provided care to flood victims in the Mosquito Coast area of Honduras after Hurricane Mitch, to war refugees in Albania, Kosovo, and Liberia, to earthquake survivors in Pakistan and Haiti, and to flood victims following the Indonesian tsunami and Hurricane Katrina in the U.S. He received the Albany Medical College Alumni Humanitarian Award and the Geisel School of Medicine John H. Lyons award for humanism in medicine.

If that weren't enough, in the past year, Dean has played a central role in creating a new nonprofit, Honduran Tolupan Education Program—Honduran TEP—devoted to building libraries and providing other basic services in half a dozen marginalized Tolupan indigenous communities in the mountainous province of Yoro. Honduran TEP is based on the recognition that literacy and access to educational resources are fundamental to enabling the Tolucan to develop their communities and defend against corrupt entities that threaten their cultural survival.

In the Congress, we talk a lot about leadership, about what it means, about its importance. We talk about how the Senate can and should be the conscience of the Nation. When I think of

Dean Seibert and what he has done in his life, how he has used his medical training and experience, combined with his commitment to social justice, for the betterment of others born into extreme poverty or victims of tragic losses, I can't think of a better example of leadership and conscience.

For much of Honduras' modern history, the U.S. has propped up corrupt, abusive governments and provided their security forces with training and equipment to support poorly conceived strategies to combat drug trafficking and stop migration. The consequences for the Honduran people and Honduras' democratic institutions have been devastating. For the most part, it is not a history to be proud of.

But all Vermonters should be proud of Dean Seibert and ACTS' and Honduran TEP's volunteers for showing a different face of America to the people of Honduras—a face of generosity, compassion, opportunity, and hope.

TRIBUTE TO CA VAN TRAN

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, in 1988, after speaking with Bobby Muller, a Vietnam veteran who was wounded and later founded the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation—VVAF—to help alleviate the suffering of Vietnamese and Cambodians who were badly injured in the war, I met with President George H. W. Bush and Secretary of State James Baker at the White House.

At the time, the United States and Vietnam did not have diplomatic relations. Vietnam's economy had been devastated by the war, but the U.S. had a trade embargo against the country which remained in effect for another 15 years. There were many hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese who had been severely disabled due to war injuries, with no access to rehabilitation services. President Bush and Secretary Baker and I agreed that it was in the interest of the United States to begin reconciling with Vietnam by addressing some of the worst legacies of the war and that the way to begin was to use what later became known as the "Leahy War Victims Fund," administered by the U.S. Agency for International Development, to provide artificial limbs and wheelchairs to victims of landmines and other unexploded ordnance—UXO.

That initiative, beginning in Vietnam, was expanded over the years to many other countries whose people have been harmed by armed conflict, and it continues to this day. One of the implementers of the Leahy War Victims Fund in Vietnam, starting in the early 1990s, has been Vietnam Assistance for the Handicapped—VNAH—whose founder and president, Ca Van Tran, left Vietnam as a refugee in 1975 with hardly a penny to his name. Over many years, through hard work and perseverance, Ca became a successful businessman in the United States. After returning to Vietnam and seeing